

The Miami-Battle Creek

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Mr. E. S. Ballenger,
4138 Mulberry Street,
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Dear Ballenger:

I have your letter of December 30.

Mrs. White ate meat and plenty of it. The next day after she arrived in America on her return from Scandinavia I took dinner with her at the house of a mutual friend near New Bedford, Massachusetts. A large baked fish occupied the center of the table. Mrs. White ate freely of it as did all the rest with the exception of the hostess and myself. From this circumstance I think Mrs. White began the use of meat during the several years she spent abroad, chiefly in Switzerland and Scandinavia. She visited the Sanitarium frequently during the years that intervened before she went to Australia. When there she always called for meat and usually fried chicken. Dr. H. F. Rand was then the cook at the Sanitarium and had become an ardent vegetarian and he on more than one occasion said to me, "It goes very hard on me to have to prepare fried chicken for Mrs. White." In those days we had a liberal table at the Sanitarium where we served meat to friends of patients who insisted on having it, although we did not prescribe it for patients.

At the annual meetings of the General Conference, which were always held in Battle Creek, we used to give the Conference a banquet.

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Most of the members were members of the Sanitarium constituency. We thought we owed them that courtesy. At these banquets they expected us to serve meat.

In those days practically all Seventh-Day Adventist ministers ate meat. They knew that Mrs. White ate it and with not more than two or three exceptions they all ate chicken or mutton stew that was usually served them.

On the day of Elder White's funeral, his brother, who attended the funeral, and his two sons, J. E. and W. C., took dinner at the Sanitarium. They ate at the liberal table and both ate meat within an hour after their father was buried.

After Mrs. White returned from Scandinavia she visited many camp meetings at some of which I was present. She was then in the habit of eating meat and the fact must have been generally known. I heard J. E. on one occasion, standing in front of his mother's tent, call out to a meat wagon that visited the grounds regularly and was just leaving, "Say, hello there! Have you any fresh fish?"

"No" was his reply.

"Have you got any fresh chicken?"

Again the answer was "No," and J. E. bawled out in a very loud voice, "Mother wants some chicken. You had better get some quick."

It was always my suspicion that he was the one who was hankering for the chicken and that Mrs. White ate it also and that it was then her habit.

I am surprised that Elder Star should state that Mrs. White did not eat meat in Australia. He must have been acquainted with the fact that she ate it regularly. She was eating meat when she went there and

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continued to eat it for several years until she got rheumatism so bad she was not able to walk and had to be wheeled about and sat in a chair while she talked.

After a while she gave up the use of meat and wrote me about it. She said that one of her addresses on Christian temperance was attended by a Catholic woman who was President of the W. C. T. U. and happened to be a vegetarian. After the lecture she called on Mrs. White and thanked her for the lecture and remarked, "Of course you do not eat meat, Mrs. White." Mrs. White replied she did sometimes, whereat the lady dropped upon her knees and with tears streaming down her face besought Mrs. White never again to allow a morsel of meat to pass her lips. Said Mrs. White in her letter to me, "I thought it was about time for me to begin my own teaching." So she said, "I have stopped the use of meat myself, but I still serve it to my workers." Fanny Bolton was with her at that time. A year or two later she returned to Battle Creek. She left Mrs. White who incorporated in one of her books something she had herself written and without giving her credit. She said Mrs. White was in the habit of doing this, copying from various other books, so that she and Mary Ann Davis had to go over the material and transpose sentences and change paragraphs and in other wise endeavor to hide the piracy. She spoke to Mrs. White about it and objected to having her own manuscript used without credit. Mrs. White was very angry and slapped her face. She mentioned the circumstance to one of the preachers and was forthwith dismissed from Mrs. White's employ and came back to America.

I do not remember the name of any minister who was advised by Mrs. White to eat meat, but I do remember clearly that she did advise some persons to eat meat.

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The fact is many people were injured by the practice of what they called health reform in those days which was not soundly based. The principal fault was in discarding butter which eliminated vitamin A and lowered the vital resistance and I think led to tuberculosis in many cases. Many people were doubtless suffering from the lack of fat, especially fat containing vitamin A as does butter fat and also tallow and suet.

When George I. Butler was in the presidential chair of the S. D. A. denomination meat was freely used and served in the provisions stands at all the camp meetings. I found this situation when I endeavored to travel around the camp meetings. There had been a universal backsliding on health reform. The backsliding probably saved a good many lives, for the people were suffering for lack of vitamins, not because they did not use meat, but because they did not use butter.

With reference to Fanny Bolton's story about Mrs. White eating oysters, Fanny told me that the first time she met Mrs. White was in Chicago in a restaurant. She had been informed that Mrs. White was eating her dinner at a certain restaurant and went there and found she was eating stewed oysters.

Mrs. White I think was not so much to blame for eating meat, oysters, etc. as the people associated with her. They made her believe that she needed meat and ought to eat it.

When I visited the Grand Rapids camp grounds, one of the first camp meetings held, I found in the provision stand conspicuously displayed whole codfish, large slabs of halibut, smoked herring, dried beef and Bologna sausage. I found some of the same things at all the camp meetings I visited.

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After a few years I succeeded in getting these things cleared out. On one occasion in order to clean up the provision stand I paid what the whole stock of meat, strong cheese and some detestable bakery stuff cost, which was fifteen dollars, and ordered it thrown into the river. I was assured that this would be done, but learned afterwards that it was put away and after the camp meeting was over was divided up among the preachers of the Conference. This was in Indiana. I received information concerning its disposal from Elder Covert who was President of the Conference.

The health reform that was taught in those days was badly mixed with error and it probably did more harm than good and it is a shame to lay the responsibility on the Almshty.

Of course I do not want to have my name used in this connection at all. I am not fighting the Seventh-Day Adventists for two reasons: I think that on the whole they are doing good and I do not want to hinder any good cause. Their errors I regret and repudiate as much as you do, probably more so. My job in the world is to create and to build up and not to destroy. I have nothing to say as to what is the duty of other people.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

John Harvey Kellogg